

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

news release

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DEPARTMENT-CALIFORNIA INTERIM MANAGEMENT PLAN AGREEMENT ON KLAMATH RIVER FISHING ANNOUNCED

The Department of the Interior and the State of California have agreed on a cooperative interim management plan for the Klamath River salmon and steelhead fishery during the 1978 fall run, which has already begun, and the 1979 spring and summer run.

In a joint announcement today, Leo M. Krulitz, Interior Solicitor and Acting Secretary, and Huey D. Johnson, California Secretary for Resources, said the agreement will allow careful management of the fishery now while long-range studies continue.

Famed fish runs on the Klamath River and on the Trinity River, a tributary, have declined seriously in recent years due in large part to dams and water diversions, logging and other land uses and management and drought. Both rivers flow through the Hoopa Indian Reservation where, Interior officials concede, efforts to regulate fishing have been largely ineffective.

After a long series of discussions with State officials failed to produce agreement on a joint plan, the Interior Department in July implemented an interim plan to regulate Indian fishing but continued discussions with the State toward regulation of all users of the resource.

The key provisions of the cooperative management agreement, which is effective immediately, would:

-- Allow a total harvest by all fishermen of 35,000 adult fall-run salmon: 30,000 to Indians at a rate of 5,000 per five-day weekly period; 5,000 for sports anglers with a two-fish-per-day limit during a fishing period of five days per week.

The responsibility for managing the Indian fishery will remain with the Indian tribes and with the Department.

-- Prohibit sales of steelhead or sturgeon;

-- Allow for complete or partial closures--except for Indian subsistence fishing which will be closely monitored to assure adequate escapement for spawning --during the spring and summer salmon run;

-- Allow closure when the total take reaches 35,000 fish or sooner if needed to allow escapement of 115,000 adult fish.

(more)

The total take could be further cut by an even earlier closure if the run is smaller than expected as it has been so far. The State and the Department will work out emergency closure provisions for all fisheries.

-- Establish an advisory group and ensure strict and fair enforcement on all parties.

Krulitz said the advisory group would also help to develop a long-range management and enhancement plan which would consider the possibility of substantially increasing the runs by improved habitat and increased natural spawning in conjunction with new or expanded rearing facilities.

State and Interior officials discussed the proposed agreement with various members of the Indian community and found substantial agreement on many points, Krulitz said, especially on the provision to limit fishing to five days per week. That limit will help ensure adequate escapement for spawning and also help support fishing upstream from the mouth of the river.

"The Department will revise its Klamath River regulations as soon as possible to reflect the cooperative management agreement and will cross deputize State enforcement officers to help implement the new regulations," he said.

"I am pleased at the State's willingness to work with us on this very tough problem. I think we have found the basis for a solution which will restore an outstanding fishery for everyone's benefit."

"The salmon and steelhead of the Klamath River are important--economically, recreationally and culturally--to many people in California. They were well known to past generations, and their numbers once made the Klamath River world-famous, but problems of over fishing, siltation from bad logging practices and dams have caused a serious decline in this resource," Johnson said.

"Now our waters are cleaner, logging practices have improved, research has shown us how to improve their habitat, and we have the opportunity to rebuild those runs and restore the Klamath River fishery."

"The interim management plan is an important cooperative step so the remnant of the salmon and steelhead runs still remaining can sustain fishing by Indians and non-Indians while we take the first steps to restore the salmon and steelhead of the Klamath and Trinity Rivers."

Hoopla Indians have federally reserved commercial and subsistence fishing rights on their reservation. Ordinarily, regulation of fishing on reservations is left to tribes and federal intervention is unusual. But 18 years of court battles have left the Indians without a tribal government capable of uniform regulation throughout the reservation, Krulitz said. Once tribal government questions are settled, tribal regulation of fishing within the boundaries of the reservation will resume.

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